



**SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE**  
**61 FORSYTH STREET, SW, ROOM 7T50**  
**ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303**  
**TELEPHONE: 404-331-3415**  
**FAX-ON-DEMAND: 404-331-3403**  
**Request Document No. 9110**

**RELEASE OF THIS MATERIAL IS  
EMBARGOED UNTIL 8:30 A.M., EST,  
FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2003**

Media Contact: Michael Wald  
(404) 331-3446  
Internet address: <http://www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm>

### CONSUMER PRICE INDEX FOR THE SOUTH—FEBRUARY 2003

The Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the South<sup>1</sup> rose 0.7 percent in February, not seasonally adjusted, to a level of 176.4 (1982-84=100), the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor reported today. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin announced that for the 12 months ending in February, the CPI-U, South increased 3.2 percent.

Over the month, higher housing and transportation costs accounted for most of the monthly increase in the all items index. Energy costs rose 5.2 percent in February while food costs increased 0.3 percent. Excluding food and energy, the CPI-U, South increased 0.4 percent over the month.

Table A. Percent changes in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for the South by expenditure category (not seasonally adjusted).

Expenditure category	Percent change from preceding month				Unadjusted 12 months Percent change ended February, 2003
	February 2002	December 2002	January 2003	February 2003	
All items	0.2	-0.2	0.3	0.7	3.2
Food and beverages	-0.1	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.7
Housing	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.6	2.5
Apparel	2.9	-2.7	-3.0	1.4	-1.8
Transportation	-0.3	-0.8	1.1	2.0	7.9
Medical care	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	5.1
Recreation 1/	-0.1	0.1	0.4	0.0	1.5
Education and communication 1/	0.3	-0.1	0.6	0.0	1.9
Other goods and services	0.8	-0.1	0.1	0.2	0.9

1/ Index on a December 1997=100 base.

Over the past 12 months, the CPI-U, South has increased 3.2 percent. During that time period, energy costs increased 20.1 percent and food costs rose 1.7 percent. Excluding the cost of food and energy, the CPI-U, South rose 2.0 percent over the year.

<sup>1</sup> South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Among the major index groups, the food and beverages index increased 0.3 percent over the month. The index reflected cost increases of 0.5 percent for food at home, which accounted for much of the increase in the food and beverages index. Other indexes rising over the month included food away from home (0.2 percent) and alcoholic beverages (0.4 percent). Over the past twelve months, the food and beverages index has risen 1.7 percent, reflecting cost increases of 1.3 percent for food at home and 2.3 percent for food away from home. Costs for alcoholic beverages have risen 1.4 percent since February 2002.

The housing index rose 0.6 percent in February. The increase was the largest one-month percentage increase for the index since June 2002. A 0.6 percent rise in the cost of shelter accounted for most of the increase in the housing index. The shelter index consists of costs for rent of primary residence, lodging away from home, and owners' equivalent rent of primary residence. The fuels and utilities index rose 0.8 percent over the month with electricity costs increasing 0.2 percent while costs for utility natural gas service moved up 3.9 percent. Costs for household furnishings and operations rose 0.5 percent over the month. Over the year, housing costs increased 2.5 percent, reflecting a 2.9 percent rise in the cost of shelter. Costs for fuels and utilities increased 2.8 percent, while costs for household furnishings and operations declined 0.4 percent over the year.

Apparel costs rose 1.4 percent in February, after declining in each of the previous three months. The increase was in line with the seasonal pattern for this index. Since February 2002, the apparel index has decreased 1.8 percent.

The transportation index increased 2.0 percent over the month, its largest one-month gain since April 2002. Higher transportation costs reflected large increases in the gasoline index, which rose 9.7 percent in February. Costs for new vehicles declined 0.4 percent in February, while the cost of used cars and trucks remained unchanged over the month. Over the past year, the transportation index has risen 7.9 percent, reflecting a 44.4 percent rise in the cost of gasoline. The 12-month increase in the gasoline index, which is subject to large fluctuations, was the largest recorded since the 12-month period ending in March 2000.

Costs for medical care rose 0.4 percent in February. The index, which has recorded increases each month since September 2000, rose due to a 0.6 percent rise in the cost of medical care services. Costs for medical care commodities declined 0.1 percent. Over the past 12 months, the medical care index has risen 5.1 percent, as costs for medical care services increased 5.8 percent and medical care commodities costs rose 3.1 percent.

Other major index groups reported include the recreation index, education and communication index, and the other goods and services index. The recreation index was unchanged in February. Over the past year, this index has risen 1.5 percent. The education and communication index remained unchanged over the month. Since February 2002, this index has risen 1.9 percent. Costs for other goods and services increased 0.2 percent in February. As of February 2003, the index stood 0.9 percent above its level in February 2002.

### **Population size groups**

Over the month, consumer prices in the South increased 0.9 percent for the largest areas, those with 1.5 million or more residents (Size Class A). In mid-size areas, those with populations between 50,000 and 1.5 million (Size Class B/C), the index rose 0.7 percent. In small metropolitan areas, those with populations of less than 50,000 (Size Class D), the index increased 0.9 percent. Over the year, consumer costs in the South rose 3.4 percent in the largest areas (Size Class A), 2.9 percent in the mid-sized areas (Size Class B/C), and 3.7 percent in the smallest areas (Size Class D).

## **Metropolitan areas in the Southeast**

Consumer prices are published bi-monthly for Atlanta and Miami-Fort Lauderdale. For the two months ending in February, the Atlanta index rose 1.9 percent, while the index for Miami-Ft. Lauderdale increased 1.3 percent. For the 12 months ending in February 2003, the all items index for Atlanta increased 2.6 percent, while the Miami-Fort Lauderdale index increased 3.0 percent. Data for the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater area are published semiannually. For the second half of 2002, the index rose 2.2 percent. From the second half of 2001 through the second half of 2002, the index rose 4.0 percent.

## **Technical Notes**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has updated the consumption expenditure weights in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) and in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) to the 1999-2000 period, effective with release of data for January 2002. The newer weights replace the 1993-95 weights, which were first used in the index effective with January 1998 data. Additionally, CPI expenditure weights will be updated at two-year intervals subsequent to the 2002 updating. Thus, for example, CPI expenditure weights will be updated to the 2001-02 period effective with release of CPI data for January 2004.

The BLS continues to publish separate indexes for the four Census regions of the United States. However, beginning in 1998, there are only two area size classes for metropolitan areas, instead of the former three: Size A - areas with a population greater than 1.5 million; and Size B/C - areas of 50,000 to 1.5 million population. This cutoff of 1.5 million in population reflects a rise from the former cutoff of 1.2 million and is important since cities in size class A are those for which the Bureau publishes city level indexes. The B/C size class is a combination of the old Size B and Size C metropolitan areas. In addition to the two metropolitan area size indexes for each region, separate Size D indexes for areas of less than 50,000 continue to be published for both the Midwest and the South. Separate indexes for Northeast and West urban nonmetropolitan areas were discontinued in 1987.

Local area CPI indexes are by-products of the national CPI program. Because each local index is a small subset of the national index, it has a smaller sample size and is, therefore, subject to substantially more sampling and measurement error than the national index, although their long-term trends are quite similar. The Bureau of Labor Statistics strongly urges users to consider adopting the national average CPI for use in escalator clauses.

We encourage users interested in learning more about changes to the CPI to contact the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Information on the Consumer Price Index and other surveys are available on our web site at <http://www.bls.gov>. Current and historical BLS data are also posted on our Internet page at <http://www.bls.gov/ro4/home.htm>. CPI data are also available through our fax-on-demand system. Table 1 for the CPI-U, South may be found under Code 9110. For a catalog of items available to be faxed to you, call our fax-on-demand number at (404) 331-3403. If you have additional questions, you can contact the Atlanta information office directly by dialing (404) 331-3415, and customers in the Miami area can reach us at (305) 358-2305.

Table 1. Consumer price index for all urban consumers and urban wage earners and clerical workers, South Region, (1982-84=100), not seasonally adjusted.

Group	All urban consumers			Percent change to Feb 2003		
	Index Feb 2003	Percent change to Feb 2003 From		Index Feb 2003	Percent change to Feb 2003 from	
		Feb 2002	Jan 2003		Feb 2002	Jan 2003
All items	176.4	3.2	0.7	173.9	3.1	0.8
All items (Dec 1977=100)	286.2	-	-	281.6	-	-
Food and beverages	176.3	1.7	0.3	175.3	1.7	0.5
Food	176.2	1.7	0.3	175.3	1.7	0.5
Food at home	173.4	1.3	0.5	172.3	1.4	0.6
Food away from home	182.7	2.3	0.2	182.0	2.2	0.2
Alcoholic beverages	177.2	1.4	0.4	175.6	1.7	0.5
Housing	167.3	2.5	0.6	165.5	2.5	0.5
Shelter	187.3	2.9	0.6	185.9	3.0	0.4
Rent of primary residence	183.4	2.9	0.1	182.9	2.8	0.1
Owners' equivalent rent (1)	189.2	3.1	0.2	176.4	3.0	0.1
Fuel and utilities	144.7	2.8	0.8	144.6	2.5	0.8
Fuels	123.4	3.1	1.1	122.4	2.6	1.0
Gas (piped) and electricity	124.5	2.4	0.8	124.0	2.1	0.8
Electricity	117.8	-0.5	0.2	117.4	-0.6	0.2
Utility natural gas service	163.8	18.0	3.9	166.1	17.9	3.8
Household furnishings and operation	127.5	-0.4	0.5	123.1	-0.8	0.5
Apparel	133.7	-1.8	1.4	132.2	-1.8	1.5
Transportation	156.3	7.9	2.0	155.3	7.7	2.1
Private transportation	154.9	8.3	2.1	154.1	8.0	2.2
New & used motor vehicles (2)	97.9	-1.8	-0.2	97.8	-2.3	-0.2
New vehicles	142.1	-1.6	-0.4	141.7	-1.5	-0.5
New cars and trucks (2) (3)	96.8	-1.5	-0.3	-	-	-
New cars (3)	140.4	-1.8	-0.3	-	-	-
Used cars and trucks	148.3	-3.4	0.0	149.2	-3.5	0.0
Motor fuel	137.6	43.9	9.6	137.6	43.9	9.6
Gasoline (all types)	136.9	44.4	9.7	136.9	44.3	9.7
Regular unleaded (3)	135.1	47.7	10.0	135.1	47.7	10.0
Midgrade unleaded (3) (4)	143.9	43.0	9.6	144.0	43.0	9.6
Premium unleaded (3)	138.0	39.7	8.6	137.9	39.6	8.7
Medical care	285.6	5.1	0.4	286.6	5.5	0.5
Medical care commodities	253.0	3.1	-0.1	249.7	3.1	0.0
Medical care services	294.4	5.8	0.6	296.0	6.2	0.6
Professional services	257.4	3.7	0.7	258.5	3.9	0.7
Recreation (2)	107.2	1.5	0.0	105.4	1.2	0.0
Education and communication (2)	109.5	1.9	0.0	108.5	1.5	0.0
Other goods and services	287.0	0.9	0.2	293.4	0.4	0.2
Commodities	152.3	2.8	1.1	152.5	2.8	1.2
Services	201.3	3.5	0.6	200.0	3.5	0.5
All items less medical care	169.8	3.0	0.8	168.0	3.0	0.8
All items less shelter	173.2	3.3	0.9	170.7	3.2	0.9
Energy	127.4	20.1	5.2	127.1	20.8	5.4
All items less energy	183.0	1.9	0.4	180.5	1.6	0.3
All items less food and energy	184.8	2.0	0.4	181.9	1.7	0.4
Purchasing power of the consumer dollar:						
1982-84=\$1.00	\$.567	-	-	\$.575	-	-
December 1977=\$1.00	\$.349	-	-	\$.355	-	-
SOUTH REGION						
Class A - More than 1.5 million pop	178.3	3.4	0.9	175.7	3.7	1.0
Class B/C - 50,000 to 1.5 million pop 5/	112.5	2.9	0.7	111.7	2.8	0.7
Class D - Nonmet less than 50,000	174.8	3.7	0.9	174.8	3.5	0.9

1/ Indexes on a December 1982=100 base.

2/ Indexes on a December 1977=100 base.

3/ Special index based on a substantially smaller sample.

4/ Indexes on a December 1993=100 base.

5/ Indexes on a December 1996=100 base.

- Data not available.